

## **Aquatic Resources Assessment of the Willow Creek Watershed**

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Ecosystems Protection Program staff of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) Region 8 completed an aquatic resources assessment of the Willow Creek Watershed to support a local watershed group, the Willow Creek Reclamation Committee (WCRC). The 39-square-mile watershed in Southwest Colorado has a rich mining legacy, which has resulted in impacts to the watershed's aquatic resources. Based on numerous investigations and studies on various aspects of the watershed, the assessment provides a comprehensive characterization of ecological and hydrological condition in the watershed. A combination of monitoring and geographic information system (GIS) data and analyses were used to assess the condition of streams, wetland, riparian, and ground water resources. Ecological condition was determined from evaluations of biological, physical habitat, and chemical condition. The assessment's watershed-wide condition classifications and stressor identifications provide a foundation for the development of a watershed management plan for future protection, restoration, and resource management efforts.